Exposing Eliz. Bentley's Contradictions

The Real Informer Issue: Protecting Secrets or Political Character Assassination?

I. F. Stone's Weekly

VOL. III, NUMBER 14 APRIL 25, 1955 WASHINGTON, D. C. 15 CENTS

A Chance to Destroy the 20 Years of Treason Myth

Former President Harry S. Truman,
Independence, Missouri.
Dear Mr. President:

Since you seem from that last haymaker of a speech to be the only Young Democrat left, the one leader in the party who's a fighter, and because it involves your honor and Franklin D. Roosevelt's, we want to ask your intervention in the case of William Henry Taylor. Taylor is an official of the International Monetary Fund, assistant director of its Middle and Far Eastern division. He is the last associate of the late Harry D. White named by Elizabeth Bentley still to hold a government position. His fight to hold his job and clear his name is also a fight to clear yours and the Democratic party's. The public hearing and the chance to cross-examine his accusers which Taylor has long sought could be a turning point in American politics, the end of the 20 years of treason smear applied to New Deal and Fair Deal by Brownell and J. Edgar Hoover.

There is another reason which may persuade you to take a hand. When you signed the 1947 loyalty order you were prevailed upon to make an exception to the right to confront one's accusers. You were prevailed upon to provide a loophole where confrontation might endanger "security." History will say that you were the President who permitted the first break in the dam of traditional safeguards against anonymous accusation. No one who knows you and your record in the Senate as well as the White House can doubt that you meant this to be no more than a strictly limited exception for use in grave circumstances. Certainly you never dreamt it would some day widen to the point where an Attorney General and the Director of the F.B.I. would use it to practice politics by character assassination on a grand scale—as they did in the 20 years of treason testimony they gave the Jenner committee 18 months ago.

Did Moscow Invent Judas?

The informer issue reverberated in the capital last week and is building up into a major political question. Before the Supreme Court, Thurman Arnold and Paul Porter magnificently argued the constitutionality and ethics of anonymous accusation in the *Peters* case. Two blocks away the Senate Internal Security Committee under that Dixieland McCarthy, Eastland of Mississippi, sought to pillory and frighten everyone in any way connected with the recantation of the informer, Matusow. The Justice Department is frantic and cries "Communist plot." To believe its spokesman would be to believe that normal Americans always honored informers until Communists came along and poisoned their minds against them; if Brownell had his way, we'd begin to believe that Judas Iscariot is a character invented by *Pravda,* and somehow slipped into Gospel when the preachers weren't looking.

The William Henry Taylor case strips the whole informer controversy naked. The only issue of security in his case is the security of Attorney General Brownell and Director Hoover. The informer Taylor has been trying to cross-examine all these years is an informer whose identity the F.B.I. allowed the House Un-American Activities to disclose publicly seven years ago in 1948. They permitted her to appear in public when two years of investigation and grand jury proceedings failed to produce a single indictment against any person she accused. This was not, as Brownell has implied, because wiretap evidence was inadmissible (she herself has several times testified that she avoided ever using the telephone) but because her story just did not hang together and was so strangely uncorroborated. She did not have a single scrap of documentary evidence to show after all those years of commuting between New York and Washington with a knitting bag full of secrets. Even that Order of the Red Star she claimed was conferred upon her was missing—the "Al" who came all the way from Moscow to present it took it back after letting her have no more than a peek.

They Won't Let Taylor Testify

Taylor told his story to the F.B.I. and the 1947 grand jury in the original investigation of the Bentley charges. Though no indictment resulted, he has been hounded ever since. Luckily, he is an official of an international rather than a purely U. S. agency, or he would have lost his job long ago, fired out of sheer political cowardice. His trouble is a strange one. Like the others accused by Miss Bentley in the so-called White ring, he also denied her charges under oath at first. Unlike many of the others, however, Taylor has continued to do so. His failure to take the Fifth has been his trouble. He has never been given a chance to testify in public by any of the witch hunt committees and has been rushed off the stand in executive session when it became apparent that he was not afraid.

When Brownell in November 1953 put into the record of the Jenner committee the special F.B.I. reports sent you, Mr. Truman, in the White House in 1945 and 1946 about the so-called White ring, there was a great to-do in the reports and in the Brownell-Hoover testimony about how carefully and completely the whole Bentley story had been checked.

If this is true, then the F.B.I. ought to hire a few old-fashioned police reporters. Taylor and his counsel, Byron Scott, a former New Deal Congressman from Long Beach, California, presented a 107 page statement to the International Organizations Employes Loyalty Board here last month which shows a whole series of contradictions and discrepancies among the various stories told by Miss Bentley, the old F.B.I. reports, and the Jenner committee statements of Brownell and Hoover.

(Continued on Page Four)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Last of the Harry White "Ring" Still in Government Employment . . .

Browder and the Silvermaster Group: In 1948 Miss Bentley told the House Un-American Activities Committee that the Silvermaster espionage group was organized in July, 1941, when Jacob Golos "told me he had received from Earl Browder the name of a man working for the U. S. government, who was interested in helping in getting information to Russia and who could organize a group of other employees to help in this work." Later the same day she said, "Mr. Silvermaster came to New York to see Mr. Golos at the behest of Earl Browder. . . ." But Browder entered Atlanta penitentiary for passport fraud in March, 1941, four months before Miss Bentley says this key incident occurred, and was not released until May, 1942!

The Spies Who Paid Dues: On her first public appearance before the Ferguson subcommittee of the Senate in 1948, Miss Bentley testified that she collected dues from the Silvermaster group and turned them over to Golos who took them "down to party headquarters, and brought me back receipts for each." After Golos died, "the money I took down to Mr. Earl Browder, and got receipts from him." From July, 1941, to May, 1942, Browder could not have been the recipient of dues, since he was in Atlanta penitentiary. "Whatever else the head of the then head of the American Communist party was capable of doing," Taylor testified, "he certainly would not sit down with Miss Bentley and write out receipts for each member's payments," and added, "Why receipts? Wasn't this supposed to be an espionage ring, operating in the dark and with the least possible evidence lying about?"

Browder Contradicts Bentley Under Oath: Browder was questioned about Miss Bentley under oath by the Tydings committee in 1950. He admitted knowing Miss Bentley as a stenographer-secretary, but never as a member of the Communist party. He denied that he had ever assigned or requested anyone to commit espionage or attempted in any way to obtain restricted information for the Soviet government "or any people . . . believed to be agents of the Soviet government." He was not indicted for perjury.

Golos and the Perlo Group: When the House Un-American Activities committee in 1948 asked her about the disposition of the party dues she claims to have collected from the members of the Perlo group, her reply was, "I turned them over to Mr. Golos during his lifetime." She testified repeatedly, however, that she took the Perlo group over in March 1944. Golos died on November 23, 1943, which was four to five months, according to her own statements, before she met Victor Perlo or any members of his group for the first time. This contradicts Attorney General Brownell's statement to the Jenner committee, "The information gathered from the Perlo group was channelled through Jacob M. Golos and onto the Soviet diplomatic establishment. . . ."

Major Duncan Lee: Miss Bentley said he was a Communist party member "our most valuable source in the OSS . . . he paid his dues to me." (Senate, 1951, p. 413.) Lee denied her charges and said he knew her as "Helen Grant," a business woman from New York. Taylor pointed out that in the FBI letter of November 8, 1945, Miss Bentley named Lee as a member of the Silvermaster group; in the FBI memo of November 27, 1945, she shifted him to the Perlo group; and in the 1948 House committee testimony she identified him as a sub-agent to Mary Price and thereafter as one of her unattached agents.

The Doolittle Raid on Tokyo: Miss Bentley testified to a Senate committee in 1949 that through William Ludwig Ullman, whom she described as then a Major in the Air Corps at the Pentagon, she obtained advance information on the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. But this raid occurred on April 18, 1942, Ullman was still in the Treasury at that time and was not drafted until October, 1942.

The Order of the Red Star: The gist of the order of the Red Star story is simple. In recognition of her "extremely valuable services to the Soviet Union," Al [whom she later identified as Anatol Gromov, first secretary of the Soviet Embassy] had been sent to the U. S. "especially" to see and tell Miss Bentley that, by order of the Supreme Presidium of the U.S.S.R., a "great honor," which "few people receive" because it is "reserved for all our best fighters," had been conferred upon her. The ceremony of presentation was unostentatious—Al took a magazine clipping, in color, from his pocket and showed it to her. A couple of months later, Al showed up with the Red Star award itself in a box, let Miss Bentley look at it and also showed her a "little book" with

New Kind of Communist?

"On December 1, 1952, Mr. Taylor testified before the Internal Security Subcommittee in executive session in New York City. The testimony, including the denial of the Bentley charges, was quite brief. As soon as sub-committee counsel saw that Mr. Taylor intended to answer all questions and was not going to plead the Fifth Amendment, he was immediately excused from testifying. He has never been called since. . . . Is the Internal Security subcommittee seeking to develop a new brand of Communists—persons who are stigmatized as Communists not because they refuse to testify and invoke the Fifth Amendment, but because they refuse to invoke the Fifth amendment, and are therefore barred from testifying?"

—Memorandum submitted to Senator James O. Eastland, Chairman, Senate Internal Security subcommittee, by Byron N. Scott, counsel for William H. Taylor.

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ONCE WARNED J. PARNELL THOMAS AGAINST BENTLEY

"What did the Department of Justice think in 1948 when it learned that Miss Bentley would be called upon to repeat her story in public? Mr. Robert E. Stripling, chief investigator of the House Un-American Activities Committee from 1938 to 1948, has left us a record of this event:

"As soon as it was made known that the Committee had subpoenaed her . . . Vincent T. Quinn, then Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division . . . came to my office to counsel caution. He was accompanied by George Morris Fay, U. S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. I sensed readily enough that their visit had something to do with Miss Bentley, so I rang up Chairman J. Parnell Thomas . . . and asked the officials to speak to him, not me.

"They urged Thomas to question Miss Bentley in executive session and warned him that while the Justice Department had never been able definitely to disprove any of her allegations there was available no material evidence, and a great dearth of corroborating witnesses. (The Red Plot Against America, 1949, pp. 91-2.)

"But the committee proceeded with public sessions, and Stripling continues:

"There were, indeed, some members who felt that we should have accepted the advice of the Justice Department and confined Miss Bentley's testimony to a closed hearing. Corroboration most certainly would be difficult to obtain. (Same, p. 94.)

"And he adds: 'Miss Bentley's story plainly was too hard to believe, I agreed.'" (Same, p. 96.)

—Taylor statement to Loyalty Board, March 28, 1955

Extra Copies of This Issue Available in Bundle Orders at Five Cents Each

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . . Points Out Some Contradictions in the Elizabeth Bentley Testimony

"Flawlessly Truthful"

"In opening the hearings on Harvey Matusow, you, as chairman . . . voiced unmeasured confidence in the truth of Miss Bentley's testimony. 'The Subcommittee,' you declared, 'put her through the crucible in our inquiry into "Interlocking Subversion in Government Departments." We found hundreds upon hundreds of documents which showed that her description of the methods of the conspiracy has been flawlessly truthful.' . . . At no time in the public subcommittee hearings has Miss Bentley been cross-examined by any of the persons against whom she made accusations. The reference to a subcommittee 'crucible' suggests a greater familiarity with the arts of chemical concoction than with the historic Anglo-Saxon process of arriving at the judicial truth."

—Scott memo to Senator Eastland on behalf of Taylor.

her name inside, the honor certified, and the date. The medal entitled Miss Bentley to many privileges—the only one she cites is the freedom to ride street cars free. Al informed her that when she came to Moscow she would be "wined and dined and treated like a princess." Unfortunately, Al took the medal away with him. . . . She doesn't even have the magazine clipping, in color. In 1948 Miss Bentley said the presentation was made in New York while walking toward Riverside drive (House, 1948, pp. 811-12). In 1951 she told a Senate committee the "presentation" was made in Naylor's restaurant in Washington (Sen., 1951, p. 254).

The $2,000 From "Al": Miss Bentley claims that "Al" gave her $2,000 on October 17, 1945, at the corner of Fourth and Tenth streets in Greenwich Village, New York, that she was then "acting under instructions and in full cooperation with the FBI" and that she had "every reason to believe" the FBI watched the transaction take place. Taylor told the hearing board, "If this payment of $2,000 was made by Gromov and observed by the FBI, it is curious that there was no mention of it, as far as is known, in the first three FBI reports dealing with Miss Bentley's activities—two in November 1945 and the third in February 1946. If the transaction had been scrutinized and verified, would it not have been highlighted as corroborative evidence in these reports?"

The Dramatic Picture That Wasn't There: In her book, "Out of Bondage," Miss Bentley says she first learned that her lover, Golos, was a spy and that his superior's name was Ovakimian in May 1941, when Golos pointed out a picture to her in the *New York Times* of a Russian engineer named Ovakimian just taken into custody by the FBI on charges of espionage. "That's the man I've been in contact with,'" Golos said "somberly," as Miss Bentley tells the story. "Now I'm afraid we're in the soup." This is how Miss Bentley describes the scene in her book:

"I still couldn't quite get my bearings.

"'But you aren't mixed up in Russian espionage,' I said dazedly, and then, seeing the look on his face, 'You mean, you are?'

"'I thought you knew,' he said in some surprise. 'I'm a member of the GPU. . . . That man whose picture you see in the paper is my superior officer.'" (p. 135.)

Taylor pointed out that this was at variance with previous testimony. On July 30, 1948, she told the Ferguson subcommittee of the Senate and on July 31, 1948, the House Un-American Activities Committee that she had no "personal knowledge" of what Golos did with the information she gave him, and that she never knew his Russian superiors except by their nicknames and that Golos was very "close mouthed."

Taylor's attorney, Byron Scott searched the *New York Times* index for 1941 and the files themselves for May of that year but was unable to find any trace of a picture of Ovakimian. Neither could that newspaper's chief librarian.

Who was Ovakimian?: Brownell declassified and put into the record before the Jenner committee in 1953 a letter sent out by the FBI on February 1, 1946, saying among other things that Golos delivered material originating with the Silvermaster ring in the Treasury to another Soviet agent named Gaik Ovakimian. "Ovakimian," Taylor told the hearing board, "had been arrested on May 5, 1941 and again on June 6, 1941, by agents of the FBI and charged with violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. He had actually registered shortly before this but the contention was that he should have registered earlier. He was freed on $25,000 bail and presumably was under constant surveillance. Jacob Golos had been indicted and convicted in March, 1940, for failure to register as an agent of the Soviet government. Would Mr. Golos, once convicted and forced to register as a foreign agent, be likely to pass on secret information to a Russian national who was in process of being tried under criminal proceedings? . . . The Silvermaster group did not begin to function until late July 1941. A Congressional committee states: "Ovakimian never came to trial in this matter. . . . He departed from San Francisco, Calif., aboard the Soviet vessel Kim on July 23, 1941" (House Rep. No. 1229, 1951, p. 17). If Ovakimian sailed from San Francisco on July 23, 1941," Taylor pointed out, "he could not have been in New York in late July, 1941, to receive Silvermaster material from Golos."

D-Day: Miss Bentley testified that she obtained the date of D-day "long before D-day happened" from Ullmann "through his connections with General Hilldring's office in the Air Corps." But Hilldring had no connection with the Air Corps, he was in Civil Affairs Division. Eisenhower himself only knew the date less than 24 hours in advance—the weather having made advance planning difficult ("Crusade in Europe," p. 250) and the Russians were kept fully notified since it was an allied operation.

A QUESTION J. EDGAR HOOVER HAS NEVER BEEN REQUIRED TO ANSWER

According to the Bentley story, she operated between two poles—Golos in New York and Silvermaster in Washington from July 1941 to November 1943. Yet both were under constant surveillance by the FBI. Golos's offices at World Tourists, Inc., in New York, were searched in October, 1939, and in April, 1940, he pleaded guilty to an indictment for failing to register as a Sovie. agent. Yet according to Bentley's story a year later he organized the Silvermaster ring in Washington.

Silvermaster was an economist who worked for the government from August 1935 to November 1946. From June 30, 1941, to February 12, 1946, the FBI carried out numerous investigations of Silvermaster and according to testimony before the Jenner committee in 1953 compiled no less than 24 reports on him. As early as 1942 an intelligence report called him a Communist "and very probably a secret agent of the OGPU" but the Civil Service Commission two years later after a lengthy review of these reports decided "the record as submitted does not contain sufficient information to warrant charges. . . ."

"Under these circumstances," Taylor asked the loyalty board last month in his own case, "how could Miss Bentley have escaped observation, suspicion and detention? Where was the FBI . . .?"

Help Clear Up the Informer Miasma By Circulating This Issue to Your Friends

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Open Letter to Former President Truman

(Continued from Page One)

Not the least of the contradictions is Miss Bentley's testimony that she received secret material during the war from Taylor and her deposition in a recent civil suit that she never saw him until May 17 of last year!

We are devoting our two inside pages this week to glimpses of this careful study of the Bentley contradictions. Taylor's counsel has asked the board to summon as witnesses not only Miss Bentley but Brownell and Hoover. In eight years of harassment, Taylor has never had his day in court. The loyalty board has had his case under advisement for more than a year and a half—obviously too honest to give in to the political pressure brought to bear upon it (a story Taylor's statement also spells out) and yet too frightened to make a decision. It will never dare summon Bentley, much less Brownell and Hoover, unless powerful countervailing political pressure is brought to bear.

You, Mr. Truman, could give this case national attention. The contradictions put on the record by Taylor and his counsel call for full explanation by Bentley, Brownell and Hoover. Their unwillingness to be questioned (though the two officials were ready enough to appear as witnesses against the Democratic party before the Jenner committee in 1953) would in itself be a confession of complicity in a vast campaign of political character assassination based on a witness who (as you will see inside) was so distrusted by the Justice Department that in 1948 they warned the House Un-American Activities Committee against using her as a witness.

Your great fighting voice could force open hearings in this case, or confession-by-avoidance. Justice to a man is at stake, but more than that—justice to the honor of the great social reform movement associated with your name and FDR's.

Sincerely yours,
I. F. Stone

Prof. Albert Einstein

Prof. Einstein would not have liked a stuffy tribute. My wife and I loved him. He was a charter subscriber to the *Weekly*, and often strained its primitive bookkeeping facilities by renewing when no renewal was due. We and our three children had the great pleasure on several occasions of having tea with Prof. Einstein at his home. It was like going to tea with God, not the terrible old God of the Bible but the little child's father-in-heaven, very kind, very wise and yet himself very much a child, too. We feel that we have lost a friend.

If our dim understanding of his work has any validity, we thought of it as a lifelong search for a new and greater unity in physical phenomena, and the reestablishment of the possibility of law in the universe. A world made up only of statistical probabilities offended his profoundest instincts; he was like Bach or Beethoven, striving for new harmonies, but with the tools of mathematics and physics. There were times when one felt his infinite zest in the search that was his life, though he sadly called himself a has-been last time we saw him, which was last August.

The man who sought a new harmony in the heavens and in the atom also sought for order and justice in the relations of men. As the greatest intellectual in the world of our time, he fought Fascism everywhere and feared the signs of it in our own country. This was the spirit in which he advised American intellectuals to defy the Congressional Inquisition and refuse to submit themselves to ideological interrogation. In that position he was interpreting the First Amendment as Jefferson would have done.

Prof. Einstein—if I read him rightly—felt like a failure rather than a success: he died without quite achieving that unified theory he sought. But his was a beautiful and satisfying life, and nothing would have pleased him more than how many—and such diverse—people remember him with affection, especially the children of the neighborhood in Princeton who recall the cookies he gave them.

In that Olympus where he goes to dwell with his few peers, this is something all his own. Newton and Copernicus and the misty Pythagoras, too, could sweep the heavens with their grasp—but none of them were remembered by so many humble friends, for so many simple human kindnesses. In this realm, far beyond politics and physics, Prof. Einstein reigns alone in warm human memory.

I. F. Stone's Weekly, 301 E. Capitol, Wash. 3, D. C.
Please renew (or enter) my sub for the enclosed $5:*

Name .....

Street .....

City .....Zone..... State.....

Enter this gift sub for $4 more (money enclosed):

(To) Name .....

Street .....

City .....Zone..... State.....

* $1 extra for Canada. 4/25/55

I. F. Stone's Weekly
Room 205
301 E. Capitol St., S. E.
Washington 3, D. C.

NEWSPAPER

Entered as Second Class Mail Matter Washington, D. C. Post Office

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED